



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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# Navajo President Joe Shirley, Jr., N.M. Gov. Bill Richardson discuss Navajo projects, during New Mexico Indian Day

**SANTA FE, N.M.** – Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson discussed the state's capital outlay funding for New Mexico tribal infrastructure projects, saving several Navajo-specific projects from the budget chopping block, the Nation's proposal on Class II gaming, and the successful Dec. 15 Navajo government reform election during a 20-minute meeting in the governor's office Friday.

President Shirley traveled here to participate in the 2010 Legislative Session's American Indian Day activities, sponsored by the New Mexico Department of Indian Affairs.

"I hadn't seen my brother for a while," President Shirley told the Governor. "It comes from the heart when I say thank you for working with us."

The first subject the Governor inquired about was the Dec. 15 initiative election to reduce the Navajo Nation Council to 24 delegates and to authorize the President with line item veto authority, and how President Shirley fared politically.

The President explained that the people supported both initiatives overwhelmingly but that the Council continues to stand in the people's way.

"You don't take on the legislature without getting singed," he said. "We still have our challenges but ultimately the will of the people will prevail."

The President expressed his appreciation to Governor Richardson for his support of 46 Navajo projects that were slated for cuts but which were saved.



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Arbin Mitchell, director of the Navajo Division of Community Development, told the Governor that grant agreements had been issued for 140 projects worth \$14 million and 14 smaller project worth some \$2 million. He said there are 63 Navajo project that need support to be saved.

"A lot of those Navajo projects were mine," the Governor said, noting the Cutter Lateral water project in particular. "As one of my last acts, I'd like to see five percent go to the tribal infrastructure fund."

The Governor said he supports H.B. 162, sponsored by House Speaker Ben Lujan, which will create a permanent source of funding for the tribal infrastructure fund.

He said despite the state's current financial difficulties, his administration was working to make sure important projects continue.

The Governor told President Shirley he had received his letter regarding the Nation's desire to begin Class II gaming and said that could hurt the state's compacts with its other gaming tribes and open the door for non-Native gaming in New Mexico.

On Jan. 26, President Shirley wrote to New Mexico Gaming Control Board Executive Director John Monforte regarding the Nation's plan to move forward with Class II gaming, which includes machines, bingo and other games.

The Governor said if the door is opening to non-Native gaming, that could hurt the Navajo Nation as well as the state.

"I want us to work together," he told the President.

"That's why I appreciate you, Governor, because you want collaboration," President Shirley said.

The President and Governor agreed to meet again in a few weeks.

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